/207 cont./

136 but since then have completely disappeared. They are therefore also retreating southward here just as along the Nishnaja /Nizhnyaya/ Tunguska. The wild sheep (tschubukún) found farther south in the Werchojansk Range had been heard of, but they are not found here even in the rockier parts of the tundra, although there, as well as here, marmots (tarbagán) are very common.

226 Our host also engaged in fishing with great success at the
439 mouth of the Omoloí, the yield of which -- mukssún, o'mul, tschír, and néljma -- except for what he uses himself, he for the most part exchanges for furs in Ustjjansk /Ust-Yansk/.

122 On the next day we continued our journey almost due south
● 13 and passed a very populous balagan, which was named for us as Iggitauýt, as well as several tributaries of the Great Omoloí, which lies to the east of the Little Omoloí which we had already crossed. We were told that the region abounded in swamps and lakes that were full of fish; the forest, although somewhat taller than that of the previous day, was still very poor in comparison with that found at the same latitude along the Olenék, alternating with great tundra-like plains. In general, it seems as though in the far north the /208/ extensive plains are not favorable for forest growth and that it remains relatively vigorous only in the more uneven terrain even up to very high latitudes. In the afternoon we reached the stan Dshüssál on the lake of the same name, where I decided to make some astronomical observations because of the exceptionally mild temperature of barely -20° R., according to which we were at 60° 38' latitude.

On our further travels the next morning we were surprised after a short trip along the shore of the Omoloí in the vicinity of the settlement Ojóma by a little grove of poplars (Populus suaveolens Fisch.). This poplar, according to the natives, reaches its northern boundary here, but has such small trunks that they are unfit for working. On the day before we had noticed many
133 willow thickets in all the river valleys that we crossed. From
122 Ojóma on a broader view of a quite considerable mountain range

/208 cont./

133 taking in the whole southern and part of the eastern horizon,
122 over which our route was to take us, opened up before us -- the Kullár Range, which, running in a northeasterly direction, seemingly parallel to the Chara-ulách Range, forms the watershed here between the Omoloí and the Jana /Yana/ basin. Although both the Kullár and the Chara-ulách ranges are probably only spurs of the main watershed between the Lena and the Jana, whose collective name, however, we could not discover, their appearance here is very different. Instead of the frequently picturesque, jagged, often conically-shaped peaks of the Chara-ulách, here we saw only massive rounded heights with steep
[137] slopes and broad flat valleys in between. After we had traveled about five versts from the Omoloí across a completely unwooded plain, we reached the /209/ foothills rising steeply, but not high, and covered with woods, and finally, after another six to eight versts, the completely treeless heights of the mountains; in the valley of an insignificant tributary of the Omoloí, the Kylagóttu, we reached the altitude of the pass, which rises at least 1,300 feet above the Omoloí and is topped by the surrounding peaks by
[136] another 400-500 feet. Here, by the way, we saw only a lower
[192] part of the range, which is said to reach much greater heights in the source area of the Omoloí, which is to be seen merely from the fact that wild sheep (tschubukún) are said to be found there in abundance, while they are still absent here.

122 Directly after the watershed we reached an insignificant
● 13 brook, Kargýchala, already belonging to the Jana basin, down whose broad valley, running southwest, we soon reached the little river Tass-Apká and the stan of the same name, which was to serve as our lodging for the night. The southern slope of the Kullár Range is considerably less steep than the northern slope; on the other hand, the tree vegetation on the latter is more vigorous and goes up farther, probably likewise evidence that the climate becomes milder toward the shores of the Arctic Ocean, which was also shown by a comparison of the temperature observations in Ustjjansk /Ust-Yansk/ and Werchojansk /Verkhoyansk/, as well as the completely unanimous statements of the natives.

53:Tokarev and Gurvich E-4 (no date) 1964
RV2 Yakut RV2

THE YAKUTS

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The Yakuts are the basic population of the Yakut ASSR, territorially one of the largest Republics in the Soviet Union. The name of this people was taken by the Russians from the Tungus, who called them Jeko. The Yakuts call themselves Sakha, and in the ancient legends they are known as Urangkhay Sakha.

General Information

By language, the Yakuts belong to the Turkic-speaking group of peoples (the northeastern branch), although the language occupies a somewhat isolated position in this group. In the vocabulary and, to some extent, in the grammar of the Yakut language, there are many Mongol elements as well as others of Tungus and of unknown origin.

The total number of Yakuts according to the 1926 census was 235,926 persons, including 122,245 men and 113,681 women. The urban population was 4936 persons and the rural population 230,990. There were 235,523 persons speaking their own (Yakut) language. Statistics for the same year tell us that the Yakuts made up 82.3% of the total population of the Republic, the remainder being 10.4% Russians, 4% Evenks and Lamuts, 0.5% Chukchi and 0.14% Yukagirs.

The principal territory occupied by the Yakuts is the basin of the Middle Lena with the Lower Aldan and Vilyuy. There are also Yakuts living close to the mouth of the Olekma River along the rivers Yana, Indigirka, Kolyma, Olenek and Anabar. Almost the whole of this region is located in the East Siberian taiga belt, which consists partly of mountains and partly of lowlands (the Vilyuy depression). In the Far North, along the Arctic coast, there stretches a wide belt of forestless tundra, 300 km long. The general landscape is a gentle slope from south to north, intersected in different directions by mountain ranges (Verkhoyansk, Cherskiy and so on). The territory is rich in mineral deposits (coal, iron, diamonds, gold, silver, lead ore, platinum, salt, semiprecious stones and so on), but before the Revolution was hardly touched at all. Apart from an extensive network of rivers, Yakutiya has a large number of small lakes. Many of them have been drying up in recent years. The banks of the lakes and rivers as well as the numerous meadows (alaas'y) within the taiga, constitute the cultural oases. The climate is a dry one, severely continental, with fierce frosts throughout the long winter (the cold pole occurs in the upper reaches of the Indigirka, near the village of Oymyakon) with a brief, though hot summer (except for the Far North and the mountainous regions). The soils are saline and fairly fertile. There is a layer of

53:Tokarev and Gurvich E-4 (no date) 1964
RV2 Yakut RV2

permafrost at a depth of one or two meters, but it does not prevent plant life. The taiga flora consists predominantly of larch, as well as some birch and pine. The animal world is rich and varied, containing squirrel, Siberian ferret, ermine, hare, fox, bear, wolverine, elk, blue fox, wild reindeer, musk deer, etc.; the species of birds are numerous and in the lakes and rivers there is an abundance of carp, different types of salmon, sturgeon, and so on.

The distribution of Yakuts throughout the territory of the Republic is extremely uneven. About nine-tenths of them are concentrated in the central regions—in the former Yakutskiy and Vilyuyskiy Okrugs. These are the two principal groups of Yakuts, the first being slightly larger in number than the second. The "Yakutiyan" (or Amga-Lena) Yakuts occupy a rectangle between the Lena, Lower Aldan and Amga, the taiga plateau, and also the adjoining left bank of the Lena. The "Vilyuy" Yakuts occupy the Vilyuy Basin. It is among these basic Yakut regions that the most typical, purely Yakut way of life has developed; it is here that it has been studied most thoroughly, particularly on the Amga-Lena plateau. The third, considerably smaller group of Yakuts is to be found in the region of Olekminsk. The Yakuts of this group are more Russified, and their way of life (though not their language) has become closer to the Russian. And, finally the last group, the smallest but most widely spread, is the population of the northern regions of Yakutiya, the basins of the Kolyma, Indigirka, Yana, Olenek and Anabar rivers.

The northern Yakuts are distinguished by a completely original cultural way of life: in this respect they are closer to the smaller hunting-fishing peoples of the North, the Tungus and Yukagirs, than their southern fellow tribesmen. These northern Yakuts are even, here and there, known as Tungus (for example, on the upper reaches of the Olenek and Anabar), although in language they are Yakuts and call themselves Sakha.

In language the Yakuts are monolithic. There are no dialects, there are only slight regional differences; for example, in the southern part, the Amga-Lena plateau, there is akan'ye [pronunciation of an unstressed "o" as "a"] and in the north and on the Vilyuy there is okan'ye [pronunciation of the unstressed "o" as "o"].

The earliest history of the Yakut district has become known only during the last few years through archeological research, chiefly through the efforts of A. P. Okladnikov. Paleolithic campsites have been found on the Upper and Middle Lena. During the Neolithic man already inhabited the entire course of the Lena, probably together with its tributaries and other Yakutiyan rivers. The neolithic tribes led the seminomadic life of hunters and fishermen. Even then there were signs of economic and cultural ties between the population of the Lena district and the more southern, easterly and western regions of Siberia. These ties became stronger during the Bronze Age. It was even recently widely believed in science that the population of Yakutiya was itself never able to work bronze, and that it obtained bronze objects from the Baykal regions and the Upper Yenisey. It has now been proved (by Okladnikov) that bronze was worked in Yakutiya itself, and, moreover, that the population carried on lively exchange with the tribes of southern Siberia, from whom they first learned about bronze.

Were these ancient tribes of the Lena district the ancestors of the present-day Yakuts? The problem of the origin of the Yakut people is one of the most complicated ones in the history of the Siberian peoples. It has a long history of its own, in fact. But until recently the solution was sought in an entirely different way; it was assumed that in origin the Yakuts were